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ABSTRACT

This agenda for educational improvement in Oakland (California) outlines community expectations of the school system and gives specific examples of what those expectations mean in practice. More than 800 individuals from neighborhood groups, churches, parent organizations, school district staff, and business and professional associations testified at a series of meetings and hearings held in Oakland from January through April 1990. The following expectations are discussed: (1) an ethical school system that teaches values and adheres to them; (2) success for school children; (3) teachers and principals who are competent and committed to excellence and hold high expectations for each child; (4) celebration of the diversity in the community; (5) school district accountability for carrying out its educational mission competently, efficiently, and equitably; (6) good working conditions for all school district staff and a safe, clean, hospitable environment for learning; and (7) a partnership between schools and the community because the schools alone simply cannot do all that the community wants done. A list of contributors is appended. (FMW)

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# GOOD EDUCATION IN OAKLAND:

## Community Agenda for Positive Change

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COMMISSION
FOR POSITIVE CHANGE
IN THE OAKLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

A project of the University-Oakland Metropolitan Forum in partnership with the Urban Strategies Council

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April 1990

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# GOOD EDUCATION IN OAKLAND: Community Agenda for Positive Change

During the four months from January to April 1990, members of the Commission for Positive Change in the Oakland Public Schools asked people throughout Oakland this question: What do you need and expect from our public schools? This is what we heard:

- **WE EXPECT** an ethical school system that teaches values and adheres to them.
- **WE EXPECT** success for our children.
- **WE EXPECT** teachers and principals to be competent and committed to excellence and to hold high expectations for each child.
- **WE EXPECT** celebration of the diversity in our community.
- **WE EXPECT** a school district accountable for carrying out its educational mission competently, efficiently and equitably.
- **WE EXPECT** good working conditions for all school district staff and a safe, clean, hospitable environment for learning.
- **WE EXPECT** a partnership between schools and the community because the schools alone simply cannot do all that we want.

This report sets out in more detail our expectations and some specific examples of what those expectations mean in practice.

Although some of what we want is not immediately achievable, the community's education agenda represents our collective vision for the schools. Presenting widely held points of agreement on WHAT WE EXPECT FROM OUR SCHOOLS, this agenda is intended to set the stage for positive change in the Oakland public schools.

## WHO WE ARE

The views reflected here include those of many people who live, work and raise children in Oakland.

- **WE ARE** the commissioners who make up the Commission for Positive Change in the Oakland Public Schools.
- **WE ARE** also the panelists — teachers, parents, administrators, academics, business and labor representatives, and other interested individuals — who have been engaged in the Commission's fact-finding process since January.
- **WE ARE** the individuals, organizations, school district employees and elected officials who have addressed concerns, ideas and hopes for our schools to the Commission during the past four months.

The Commission affirms its solidarity with Oakland residents committed to our children, to our public schools, and to making positive change happen. Together, WE CAN.

## WHAT WE HAVE DONE

The 19-member Commission for Positive Change in the Oakland Public Schools, in cooperation with the Oakland Unified School District, has launched a community process to create a long-range educational and financial plan for the schools and to initiate strategies for its implementation.

As a starting point, commissioners set out to learn first-hand what the community expects from our schools. The Oakland community has responded generously to the Commission's invitations: more than 800 people have spoken to commissioners at meetings and public hearings held from January to April 1990. Among them were individuals from neighborhood groups, churches, parent organizations, school district staff, business and professional associations. With grateful acknowledgement to all who have contributed time and thought to the process, the Commission issues this summary of what we have heard: the Community Agenda for Positive Change.

*"My daughter's first-grade class at Grass Valley school is already into their third reader for the year, and she gets a lot of homework that makes her think. When I took in a foster child, I was shocked to discover that his first-grade class — at a flatland school — has not started a reading book yet and it is already spring! His homework is just a weekly list of spelling words. This can't be right."*

***We expect an ethical school system that teaches values and adheres to them.***

**Widely held community values must be taught through the curriculum and also through the personal interaction of teachers, students and parents, and among all who work with the schools. In practice, this means:**

- Every individual is treated with **respect**.
- **Diversity** of ethnicities, languages and cultures is honored, while racism in its many forms is recognized and condemned.
- **Honesty** and **integrity** are not compromised.
- **Fairness** is required at every level of operation.
- **Equity** governs the allocation of resources on the basis of need to attain **equality**, so that the value of an education at any one school is as great as the value at others in the district, and graduates districtwide enjoy equal opportunities for careers and continuing education.
- **Competence**, **consistency** and **commitment** are demanded.
- **Creativity** and **love of learning** are supported.
- **Excellence** is recognized and rewarded.
- **Accountability** is manifest from the school board to the classroom.

**Regular evaluation of practice and performance against a published set of standards must reinforce the values and ethics of the school system and its community.**

*"We depend on the school district to select very carefully the people we leave our children with all day long."*

***We expect success for our children.***

**We want the best for every child. In practice, this means:**

- Schools produce graduates who are confident, competent, proud of their ethnicity, heritage and traditions as well as respectful and appreciative of others.
- Schools prepare each student for the widest range of choices after graduation, from careers to higher education.
- Schools nurture and motivate each student to stay in school, achieve and graduate.
- Schools recognize student needs and design programs to serve all ethnic groups, those who are low-income, non-English speaking children, disabled children and those who are otherwise not well served in our society, with particular attention to the needs of immigrant newcomers, African-American young men and boys, children enrolling for the first time at 8 or 9 years of age and older, pregnant and parenting teens, children in foster care or homeless, and drug-exposed children.
- Students perform comparably with their peers statewide and nationally on standardized tests.
- Students demonstrate at least a year's academic growth for each year spent in school, as reflected by school work and test scores, and those who have fallen behind receive an accelerated educational program designed to bring them to grade level within two years.
- Schools offer a broad curriculum that includes music, the arts, industrial arts, computer science and physical education as well as a full palette of rigorous academics.
- Students receive timely and positive academic counseling that encourages them to aim high and guides them through the practical prerequisites for attaining their goals.

*"Don't make us out to be a poor generation — we are going to be the best generation yet."*

High school senior

**Schools must help students discover a sense of purpose in education and a love of learning. In practice, this means:**

- Classes are interesting and important, examining the world as students know it and exposing them to challenging ideas and opportunities they may not otherwise see.
- Instructional strategies and classroom management techniques promote cooperative, active and experiential learning, rather than passivity among students.

**Teaching must be designed to bring out each child's strengths, help students overcome failure and learn from their mistakes.**

**Schools must ensure that graduates are educated: literate, numerate, critical thinkers who are prepared to participate in the civic, social, cultural and economic life of our community.**

***We expect teachers and principals to be competent and committed to excellence and to hold high expectations for each child.***

**Teachers and principals must act on the belief that all children can learn. In practice, this means:**

- Each child is expected to achieve excellence.
- Each child has access to a rigorous and relevant core curriculum.

**Teachers must be competent and supported by their principals. In practice, this means:**

- Teachers are qualified and assigned to teach within their subject area.
- Teachers keep up-to-date in their subject area and its practical applications.
- Teachers and principals use classroom techniques that support various learning styles to maximize each child's educational achievement.
- Teachers and principals have access to current technology tools.
- Teachers and principals have opportunities for professional growth and development and access to new education theories, models and methods.
- Teachers who are just beginning, or who are struggling, receive supervision and support.
- Principals provide leadership that encourages excellence among teachers and students.

**Teachers and principals must demonstrate commitment to their students and the educational process. This means:**

- Teaching brings the real world into the classroom and provides opportunities for students to explore outside the classroom.
- Teachers and principals listen and respond to students, encouraging students to take responsibility for the quality and character of their school experience.
- Teachers and principals are open to ideas, willing to try innovations they deem worthwhile.

*We expect celebration of the diversity in our community.*

**Oakland is a community rich in cultures, ethnicities and languages. The schools must promote and reflect that richness. This means:**

- School personnel are educated about the cultures and histories represented among the children they teach.
- School personnel are as diverse as the student body, providing the sensitivity and language skills to bridge school with home.
- Textbooks are infused with the contributions of all peoples.
- Diverse values and traditions are integrated in every aspect of the educational program.
- Education is no longer presented from an exclusively European-centered point of view.
- Instruction and programs are designed for students to interact harmoniously across racial, ethnic, cultural and language differences.

**Schools must nurture and support our diversity. In practice, this means:**

- Communication with students and families whose home language is other than English is encouraged by providing interpretation services at schools.
- Bilingual education is accessible to all who need it, and is fully and effectively implemented.
- Bilingual school personnel — counselors, nurses, administrators and classified, as well as teachers — mirror the primary languages of the community in which they work.

*"A very sad case was my son. We are from Mexico and he is learning English, but when he had a problem at school, the principal didn't understand him and things got much worse than they should have."*

***We expect a school district accountable for carrying out its educational mission competently, efficiently and equitably.***

**The central administration must demand competence and reward excellence throughout the system. In practice, this means:**

- Published standards reflect the district's educational goals and objectives.
- Regular evaluations are used to measure performance and trigger appropriate consequences.
- Results are communicated throughout the school system, to the public and meet community expectations.

**Efficiency in the system must be built on competence. Regular monitoring and evaluation will enable administrators to make informed decisions. In practice, this means:**

- The educational mission, goals and objectives are communicated to parents and the community at large.
- Planning throughout the system promotes informed decision-making, systemic improvement and achievement of goals and objectives.
- Stakeholders are included in planning, decisions, implementation and evaluation.
- Budget is driven by the educational mission.
- School site requests for support or supplies receive prompt, useful response.
- Revenues are maximized, with additional revenues generated through grantwriting and expanded private sector support.
- Expenditures are prioritized and balanced to resources (a balanced budget).
- Effective programs are replicated rather than ignored or lost altogether, and weak programs are strengthened or cut in accordance with standards, goals and objectives.

- The person held accountable is also the person with control.
- Decisions, even difficult decisions, are based on standards, goals and objectives, restoring trust and confidence.

**The school system must take our children as it finds them and provide an educational program which makes good on the American promise of equal opportunity. To achieve this, the system must allocate resources among the city's schools equitably — on the basis of need — so that children can compete successfully with their peers citywide, regardless of which school they happen to attend. In practice, this means:**

- Quality early childhood programs are available for all families who apply, with priority given to the needs of low-income families.
- Every school has enough textbooks, materials and supplies of appropriate kind.
- Every school has qualified, competent teachers, administrators and support staff, including appropriate bilingual staff, and access to competent substitutes.
- Every child has access to a rigorous and relevant core curriculum in a climate of high expectations.
- Every child has choices beyond the core curriculum — music and the arts, industrial arts, physical education and computer science — to enhance their opportunities for learning and for success.
- Counseling and related services are available throughout the grades to nurture students and to help them meet academic and non-academic needs and goals.

***"The newspaper said Joaquin Miller School raised $23,000 at their walk-a-thon last year. Until I read that, I was pleased that our school walk-a-thon raised $3,700. I guess there are some differences among schools that I haven't taken fully into account."***

***We expect good working conditions for all school district staff and a safe, clean, hospitable environment for learning.***

**School personnel must be competent, fairly and adequately paid, and must work in a climate of mutual respect, support, teamwork and trust.**

**School personnel must be provided opportunity and credit for in-service training and professional growth.**

**The ratio of staff to children must be sufficient to create an atmosphere of caring and personal attention that supports learning.**

**School classrooms, buildings and grounds must be adequately furnished, equipped and maintained.**

**Students, teachers and staff must feel physically and emotionally safe at school. This means:**

- Every individual is treated with respect.
- Standards of conduct are clearly articulated, then fairly, consistently and firmly enforced.
- Expectation of excellence sets the tone for the school environment.
- Supervision and security — whether provided by the schools, city services, or others — are adequate on campuses and on routes to and from school.

*"I could recognize at the elementary level those children who are my heartbreaks today."*

Junior high school principal

**Parents and other caregivers, as partners in the education of our children, must be informed and welcomed at schools. This means:**

- Families are shown respect, courtesy and support by all school personnel.
- Families are contacted promptly when problems appear, to prevent crises.
- Families are contacted about students' accomplishments, not just their problems.
- Families whose home language is other than English receive information in their primary language and are provided with interpretation at school by an adult, not the student.
- Families are consulted and included in decisions affecting their children and their school.
- School personnel model the values and behaviors we want children to learn, asking and giving respect, cooperation, consistency, punctuality, compassion and fairness.

***We expect a partnership between schools and the community because the schools alone simply cannot do all that we want.***

**Schools must accept responsibility, but not sole responsibility, for the needs of the whole child. In practice, this means:**

- Schools establish partnerships with families to develop the whole child.
- Schools participate in finding ways to connect with outside services that address the health, mental health and material needs of youth.
- Qualified people — nurses, counselors, psychologists and others — respond to the need for early intervention, assessment and prevention services, as well as for crisis intervention.
- Schools and other service providers share information to better serve children.
- Schools encourage mentoring, volunteers and links with community-based organizations that can provide role models and other adult and peer support for students.

**Schools and business must pursue partnerships to help students understand and experience the connections between education and the world of work, and to link graduates with jobs.**

**Schools and their neighboring communities must offer intersession child care in the year-round schools and must explore the feasibility of keeping facilities open for adult education, tutorials, after-school recreation, child care and other family education and support activities.**

**Schools must build an alliance with parents, other caregivers and the larger community to reinforce the values and opportunities education seeks to deliver.**

**Media attention must be directed to the accomplishments of our schools to build momentum for positive change and help restore confidence in our schools.**

**School-community alliances must be parlayed into responsible political action in support of adequate school funding.**

# WHERE WE GO FROM HERE

The concerns and values reflected in this Community Agenda for Positive Change will guide the continuing work of the Commission.

Since January, six fact-finding panels — meeting biweekly and in some cases more often — have been looking at conditions and opportunities for positive change in the schools. The panels have focused on Education and Instruction, Administration and Management, Structures, Finance, Schools in the Larger Community and the Teaching Profession. In each area, panelists are considering models of excellence in Oakland and across the country. Each panel will report its findings to the Commission, and all the panelists will gather to hear the various reports. The school district — teachers, principals and classified staff, as well as central administrators — will be asked to review the findings and comment on them.

Informed by the Community Agenda and the findings, each panel will meet during May to formulate options for positive change in Oakland.

The Commission will compile school district comments, panel findings and options, and will form its preliminary recommendations. Those will be subjected to review and comment by the panels, after which the work of the panels will cease.

The Commission's revised recommendations will be taken to school district staff and to the commu-

nity in a round of hearings and community meetings aimed at informing people and obtaining feedback. The commissioners will want to hear from those who have helped shape the Community Agenda and will welcome input from others.

By late summer, commissioners expect to blend the input from the school district, the panels and the community in a final set of recommendations for positive change.

To bring about positive change, however, good ideas will not be enough. The Commission and the school district are committed to developing strategies to make change a reality. Strategic planning, centered on the recommendations, will involve the school district's central administration staff responding to central office issues and school site personnel responding on a school by school basis. With school district personnel prepared to implement change and the community mobilized in support of change, WE EXPECT POSITIVE RESULTS.

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These are the people we have heard from. (If we have inadvertently missed your name, let us know.)

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Ha Le Ly
Young Ly
James D. Lytner

# M

Lois MacGillivray
Karen Macklin
Mary Madden
Pearl Madison
Steven Magana
Martine Makower
Marilyn Manequilt
Daniel L. Manske
Earthlyn Manuel
Gruu Marizville
Willa Marlow
Verdell Marshall
Tina Martin
Anna Martinez
Arleda Martinez
Ron Martinez
Ruben Martinez
Al Marutsuchi
Ernestine Mason
Jan Matsuoka
Cecelia Matthew
Anne Mayfield
Margie Mayfield
John McCready
Shirley McDonald
Katie McLane
Gwyneth McMillan
Alfred McNeal
Leslie Medine
M. Mekana
Martha Melda
Richard P. Mesa
Henry Mestre
J. Metters
Mary Middleton
Donald Miller
Frankie Miller
Stanley Miller
Wayne Miller
Beverly Milroy-Johnson
Luertha Minnifield
Rebecca Minqura
Bonnie Mitchell
Edna Mitchell
Phann Mok
Riem Mok
Carolina Lee Momz
Pat Monson
Andre Moore
Helen Moore
Josephine Moore
Mable L. Moore
Phyllis Moore
Leticia Morales
Mizulio Miki Morimoto
Barbara Morris
Carmen Mould
Jan Munn
Miriam Murari
Norma Murphie
Marion Murphy

# N-P

Arlene Nadie
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Susana Navarro
Theresa Navarro
Daniel Nelson
Kathy Nelson
Olympia Nero
Loi Nguyen
Ek Nhek
Bernadette Nicholson
Isao Nishijima
Janet Noble
Wade Nobles
Velma Norman
Noun Norn
Nunn Nuth
Steve O'Donoghue
Helda Ochoa
F. Olaro
Bakari Olatunji
Leslie Olrich
Nehemi Garcia Oopeza
Oeage Oropeja
Hector Orosa
Celso Ortiz
Christina Owyang
Violet Pace
Constantino Padaong
Melba Padaong
Margarito Padilla
Mario Padilla
Dolores K. Padovani
Charles Pagora
Jose F. Palacios
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Dorothy Parrish
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Kathy Patric
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Evelyn Pavone
Damita Payne
Gloria E. Paz
Jimmy Pederson
Yolanda Peeks
Louis Pelazo
Marcy Pelinsk
Lydia Penate
George Y. Penbor
Wallace Peterson
Chieu Pham
Franklin Phillips
Margaret Phillips
Ricardo Pierces
Aglipino Pineda
Tonia Pleasonton
Phen Phong
Judy Pope
Don Porteous
Trek Porter
Vicky Porter
Bernadette Posadas
Ellen Posey
Florence Powell
Preak
E.R. Previtt
Elizabeth Pruyn

# Q-R

Jean Quan
Jean Querey
Jack Radey
Ray Rainey
Agnes Ramirez
Taiwan Ramirez
Elda Ramirez
Coralia V. Ramos
Jose Ramos
Paul Randall
Catherine Rankins
Emma C. Raos
Khanmalee Rattanainth
Diane Raulston
Larry Reid
Edgar Revelo
Maria Revelo
Catalina Reyes
Kyle Richard
Barbara Richardson
Janie Richardson
Tommie Richardson Rig
William Riles
Wilson Riles Jr.
W.S. Riley
Guadalupe Rios
Marbella Rios
Muth Rith
James Rivers
Naomi Roberts
Terry Roberts
Cecil Robertson
Bill Robes
Sammie Robinson
Nicole Robinson-Nobles
Paula Robles
Rosalba Rodas
Rubila Rodas
Cheryl Rodby
Lynne Rodegno
Dy Roeun
Enedrina Rodriguez
Gabriela Rodriguez
Jesus Rodriquez
Maria Elena Rodriquez
Dorothy Rogers
John Rogers
Leurenne Rogers
Elishica Romar
Peter Roos
Carlos Rosales
Cora Rosales
Pam Roundtree
Ward V. Roundtree
Victor Rubin
Jenny Rudolph
Delia Ruiz
Galdad Ruiz
Raul Ruiz
Beth Russell
Camille Russell
Sonia Russel
Targa Russell

Khlot Ry
Thong Ry
Jeff Ryan

## S

Denise Saddler-Lipscomb
Kouichoy Saechao
Chhom Sakhan
Mok Sakhon
Peggy Saika
Ellen Salazar
Aurora Salvador
Francis Samsotha
Zisanna Samuels
Jose Sanchez
Maria Luisa Sanchez
Shelia Sanders
Kosal Sar
B. Savage
Robert Scannell
Phillip J. Schein
Louis Schell
Charles E. Schwyn
Carole Scott
Gerri Scott
Jennie Scott
Paul O. Scott
William Scott
Jane Searight
John Seely
Bill Self
Elizabeth Selloy
F. Sengdura
Yahya Shabazz
Nabuhah Shakir
Mimi Sham
Klarence Shanks
Dale Shaw
Ma Sheilah
Margaret Siegle
Paul Silberstein
L.J. Silvas
Ellen Simien
Marjorie Simmons
Dannay Sing
Richard Siu
Joseph Sklar
Rita Sklar
Prudence Slauthaug
Helen Smiter
Don Smith Jr.
Marvin R. Smith
Michael Smith
Norma Smith
Pauline Smith
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Ruthie A. Smith
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Jo Ellen Spencer-Perry
Michael Spight
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C.C. Staton
Charles Staton
Cornelius Staton Jr.
Percy Steele
Mona Steffani
Mel Stenger
Steve Stevens
Mary Lou Stnger
Barbara Stone
Steve Straus
Mary B. Strauss
Barbara Styles
Ted Sugarman
John R. Sullivan
Heng Suthan

## T-V

Betsy Tamura
M.L. Tatum
Brenda Taylor
Jewel L. Taylor
Paula Taylor
Robert Taylor
Sandra Taylor
Terrell Taylor
Valerie Taylor
Warren Taylor
Sharon Taylor-Williams
Ethel M. Tennemann
Andrea Thomas
Inga Thomas
Rasha Thomas
Katherine Thompson
M.A. Thompson
Vance Thompson
Thong
Kay Tillman
Moises Tinoro
Virginia Tiviero
Annamae Louise Tolan
James Tolan
Silivia Tong
Rosy Torres
Silvia Torres
Kathy M. Trapp
Bennea Travis
Chin Tran
Emma Trent
Sharon Tringali
Judy Turley
Flora Uichis
Rosa Unias
Jannat Unnisa
Guadalupe Valdez
Jose Valles
Richard Van Egu
Consepcion Vargas
Gloria Vargas
Maria E. Vargas
Socorro Vega
Silvia Velozquo
Tom Ventresco
Elida Verduzco
Myrna Vidor
Flora Vihchi
Roberto Villa
Rafael Villalobos
Chris Visher
Mical Visher
Ben Visnico
Phuong Vu
Jonathan Vuong
Sandra Vuong

## W-Z

Artis C. Walker
James Walker
Marie Walker
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James M. Walsh
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Barbara Warren
Martha Warren
Martha Warren
Pat Waters
LaVerne Watkins
Bobbie Watson
Patricia Watts
Loretta Webb
Stephen S. Weiner
Shelley Weintraub
Bill Welch
Barbara Wells
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James Welsh
Lois Werner
Willie West
Solomon Wheat
Connie White
Sandi White
Joan Wilcox
Raisa Wildridge
Cathen Wilem
Bettie Ann Williams
Bettie J. Williams
Eulamae Williams
Iva Williams
Lea Williams
Lewis Williams
Teresa Williams
Patricia Williams-Myryck
Larry Williamson
Sandy Williamson
Catherine Wilson
Donna Wilson
John Wilson
Juanita Wilson
Voncile Wilson
Kay Winer
Charles Winston III
Sue Woehrle
Bob Wolf
Benjamin Wong
Fay Wong
Leonard Wong
Michael Wong
Miles Woods
Martin Worth
Harriet Y. Wright
Lillian J. Wright
Oscar Wright
Edwin Wrun
Ellen Wylick
Alnur Xrussell
Ann Yamot
Kirk Yar
Gary Yee
Glenna Yee
Phyllis Yee
Carolini Yei
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Phan Young
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Yolanda Zamora

We have tried to include here the names of all those who attended the various meetings and hearings in this process and who helped contribute to the content of this report. If we have omitted or incorrectly listed your name, please contact the Commission at 643-9103 with the correct information.

## COMMENTS

If your concerns are not already part of this agenda, or if you want to comment further, write to: Commission for Positive Change in the Oakland Public Schools, Box 33, 5825 Telegraph Avenue, Oakland, CA 94609. If your organization would like to meet with Commission representatives, please call Ed Ferran or Henry Izumizaki, (415) 643-9103.

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